

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW**

**NOTICE OF DECISION**

**TO:** Robert Bensussen  
c/o Morris Piha Real Estate Services, Inc.  
P.O. Box 53290  
Bellevue, WA 98015

Jeff Thomas  
Crossroad Sign  
13406 NE 177<sup>th</sup> Place  
Woodinville, WA 98072

**SUBJECT:** Downtown Issaquah Plaza -- Administrative Adjustment of Standards for Monument Sign, increase with square footage allowance

**APPLICATION:** Administrative Adjustment of Standards: AAS14-00002

**PRJ NUMBER:** PRJ14-00005

**DATE OF DECISION:** May 23, 2014

**REQUEST:** Application for Administrative Adjustment of Standards for signage. The adjustment of standards request is to allow for an increase in the sign area from 25 square feet per face to 36.3 square feet per face in order to provide adequate space needed for several tenant names to be placed on the sign. An existing sign at the proposed location is 4' x 8' wide and in poor shape has 6 just tenant panels. The Olde Town Design Standards limits multifamily business monument signs to a maximum of 25 square feet per face which is too limiting for the number of tenants at the Downtown Issaquah Plaza desiring to be listed on the sign.

**LOCATION:** Located at 20 – 100 Front Street South (Issaquah Downtown Plaza). The sign is proposed to be located where the existing monument sign is located at the southwest corner of the site. See location with vicinity map (Exhibit 4).

**SUBAREA:** "Olde Town"

**KING COUNTY PARCEL:** King County Parcel No. 2354300135

**EXISTING LAND USE:** The property is currently developed with three 1-story buildings that make up the Downtown Issaquah Plaza

comprised of various retail tenants.

**DECISION MADE:** On May 23, 2014, the Development Services Department conditionally approved the Administrative Adjustment of Standards for the above proposal. Approval of this application is based on the submittal of March 12, 2014, Exhibits 1 through 11, and is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to installation of the signage, a Sign Permit is required from the City of Issaquah Permit Center. All conditions of the sign permit will need to be complied with.
2. The background colors proposed behind the lettering of the sign shall be opaque and not translucent. The adopted Olde Town Design Standards does not allow internally illuminated boxes.
3. The ground mount sign cannot obstruct the view of motor vehicle operators at the shopping center's driveway location.
4. The landscaping around the sign must be restored to equal to or better conditions prior to the project completion.
5. An Electrical Permit for the sign lighting is required and is to be obtained through Labor & Industries.

#### **DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR SIGNS:**

Section 18.11.010 of the Issaquah Sign Code states the following under "Purpose":

- A. Promote traffic safety and protect the health, property, safety and general welfare of its citizens.
- B. Establish standards for the design, placement, size, renovation, and proper maintenance of all exterior signs and sign structures in the City.
- C. Ensure that signage is clear and compatible with the adjacent architecture and the unique character and natural beauty of Issaquah.
- D. Encourage signs and sign structures which are both functional and attractive and which clearly respond to the needs of the public in locating a business establishment by identification, address and/or information.
- E. Reduce distractions and obstructions from signs that would adversely affect traffic safety, and to alleviate hazards caused by signs projecting over or encroaching upon public ways.
- F. Assist businesses in contributing to the economic well being of the community.
- G. Support the goals and vision of the "Mountains to Sound Greenway" project by managing the type, location and proliferation of signage that may be visible from I-90.

#### **REASONS FOR DECISION:**

1. The subject site is zoned "CBD", (Cultural Business District), according to the City's Zoning Map. Signage within the City falls under the jurisdiction of the Issaquah Sign Code, IMC 18.11 and the Olde Town Design Standards. The Issaquah Sign Code permits the adjustments of specific code provisions through an Administrative Adjustment of Standards (AAS). AAS's are reviewed through a Level 2 Review process, as established in Section 18.04.370 of the Issaquah Land Use Code.

2. The proposed sign is located at the southwest corner of the Downtown Issaquah Plaza, a shopping center comprised of numerous retail stores. The proposal is to replace an older wooden multi-tenant sign at this location with a newer sign that will allow more space for the tenants that make up Downtown Issaquah Plaza.
3. The City's Olde Town Design Standards that became effective on July 2, 2001, provides the regulations for free standing signs. Page 41 of the Standards allows free-standing signs in the CBD zone for any existing development that contains multiple buildings and multiple tenants. The regulations go further to state that the signs shall not be greater than 25 square feet in area per face and not higher than 10 feet above grade. The Downtown Issaquah Plaza is comprised of multiple buildings (3) and with multiple tenants to qualify for a free standing sign.
4. The proposal is for a double faced sign that is 10 feet in height, 36 square feet in sign area on each side, and is 4 feet back from the sidewalk. The sign is 16 inches wide. The sign is within the allowable height limit for the CBD zone but is greater than the 25 square feet per face stated in the Old Town Design Standards in order to have adequate space for several tenants to be listed rather than just a limited few. Outside of the CBD zone a similar ground mount sign is allowed to have 50 square feet per face.
5. A drawing of the proposed sign illustrates the name of the shopping center at the top of the sign stating "Downtown Issaquah Plaza (Exhibit 7). Below that are tenant panels with divider bars between each. The proposal shows 17 individual tenants on the face of the sign. The letters on the sign are transparent white vinyl. The background behind the letters is proposed to be both dark green and burgundy of translucent vinyl. See discussion below under section 8(d) regarding the translucent vinyl.
6. The proposed sign is rectangular in shape with 2 supporting aluminum posts on the sides. The posts are a dark mustard color. The readable message area between the posts is 48 inches wide by 109 inches in height (36.3 square feet) and is all aluminum construction. The sign is internally lit with florescent tubing.
7. The Purpose of the Administrative Adjustment of Standards, according to Section 18.11.540(A) of the Land Use Code is: *"The purpose of permitting the administrative adjustment of Sign Code standards is to provide for flexibility that is compatible with Issaquah's character, to acknowledge the artistic creativity of sign makers, and to revitalize retail areas consistent with the City's Vision, Development Guidelines, the Comprehensive Plan (including the Subarea Plans)"*.
8. The proposal as conditioned, meets all of the 6 criteria required for approval of an administrative adjustment of sign standards approval criteria as listed in Section 18.11.540(D) of the Issaquah Land Use Code. The project is compatible and consistent with the following criteria:
  - a. *The intent of the Sign Code is better achieved with the administrative adjustment than by any other alternatives allowed in this section;*

Planning analysis: One of the purposes of the Sign Code, as stated in IMC 18.11.010-B, is to "Encourage signs and sign structures that are both functional and attractive and that clearly respond to the needs of the public in locating a residence or business establishment." The Purpose also states in subsections A

and B and C the following:

- A. *Assist business in contributing to the economic well being of the community.*
- B. *Encourage signs and sign structures that are both functional and attractive and that clearly respond to the needs of the public in locating a residence or business establishment.*
- C. *Ensure that signage is representative of the business and compatible with the unique character and natural beauty of Issaquah;*

Planning analysis: The proposed sign for Downtown Issaquah Plaza is designed to contribute to the well-being of the community by providing space on the sign for all tenants of the shopping center to receive some exposure along Front Street. The southern-most building in this shopping center has very limited street exposure to view their wall mounted signs. The owners support all tenants having fair signage on the site and the proposed sign is designed to correct the lack of exposure from the existing monument sign. The number of tenants in the shopping center does not fit clearly to be read on a small sign of 25 square feet. The letters (block style) themselves are not overly large and are clean looking in appearance without clutter. All tenant names are white in color. Having names on the sign will assist the public (vehicular or pedestrian) in locating the business establishments. The sign will be compatible with the character of the Olde Town neighborhood.

- b. *Sufficient reason is shown for the adjustment in order to address exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved, or intended use of the property, that are not contemplated or provided for by this chapter;*

Planning analysis: The intention by the applicant is to allow for an increase number of tenants to be placed on the sign that is not possible with a limited 25 square foot sign. In comparing retail centers that are outside of the CBD zone (such as along Gilman Boulevard or along East Lake Sammamish Parkway), they are given a sign allowance of 50 square feet per face (and double sided) to allow for the names of the retail centers and tenants. 25 square feet per face is restrictive in having enough space for both the name of the shopping center and the retail tenants that would be listed.

- c. *The modification is compatible with the scale, character and design of the building in which the use is located;*

Planning analysis: The proposed sign will be located in an existing planter where an existing older sign will be removed (photo provided of the existing sign with Exhibit 8). The sign will be compatible with the scale, character and design of the shopping center. No ground mount sign is proposed along East Sunset Way that also fronts the shopping center. Front Street Market has an existing non-conforming reader board sign facing Front Street that is not proposed to altered or removed.

- d. *The modification is compatible with the scale, character, design and lighting of the adjacent neighborhood or business district;*

Planning analysis: The sign will face front Street South and being double sided in design, will be visible for both north and south bound vehicle and pedestrian traffic along that route. The sign is 10 feet in height which is the allowable maximum height for ground mount signs. The sign will be placed in an existing planter where the existing monument sign will be removed. Landscaping in this area may need to be restored if disturbed by the construction. Ground mount signs are not common downtown as they are only allowed for developments consisting of multiple buildings and multiple retail tenants which this shopping center has. Few developments in the CBD zone have both to qualify for a ground mount sign.

The lighting of the sign is proposed to be florescent tubing covered with translucent vinyl with reversed out lettering. The Olde Town Design Standards states in section 5 of the standards the following not being allowed: "Internally illuminated boxes with formed or painted lettering are not permitted. (If this requires removal of an existing cabinet sign, permit fees for a new sign shall be waived.)"

Because the proposal is described to be translucent on both sides, the sign can be construed to be an internally illuminated box style sign. Therefore, the background colors behind the lettering will need to be designed to be opaque in order to comply with the Olde Town Design Standards.

- e. *The modification is consistent with the purpose of this chapter and would not adversely affect the neighborhood in which the business is located;*

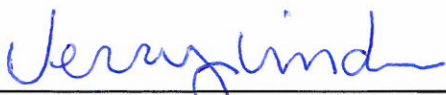
Planning analysis: The proposed wall sign will not adversely affect the CBD neighborhood or businesses in the area. The sign will face commercial areas in both directions along Front Street South. No negative comments were received of the proposal from other businesses in the neighborhood as provided by the public comment process discussed below.

- f. *Meets the procedures and approval criteria of a Level 2 Review (IMC 18.04.370).*

Planning analysis: The procedures and criteria for a Level 2 Review were met for the project, including departmental review and notification to surrounding property owners. Surrounding property owners did not respond to the request as noted in the paragraph below required for a Level 2 Review.

9. A Notice of Application with drawings of the proposal was mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the site on March 28, 2014 (Exhibit 10), and a 14-day comment period was established that expired on April 11, 2014. No correspondence was received during the 14 day comment period. This Notice of Decision is provided to those who requested to be a party of record which none of the surrounding property owners requested. The appeal period for the Notice of Decision will end on June 6, 2014.
10. The AAS project application and plans were routed to all project reviewing departments and divisions, and their comments and concerns have been addressed in this Notice of Decision.

11. The project has been determined to be SEPA Exempt per WAC 197-11-800(2)(b). An environmental checklist was not required.



Jerry Lind, Senior Planner



Date Signed

**EXHIBIT LIST:**

1. Application, AAS14-00002, received 3-12-2014
2. Affidavit of Agent Authority for Downtown Issaquah Plaza, LLC, received 3-12-2014
3. Legal description, received 3-12-2014
4. Vicinity Map
5. Narrative description (1 page), received 3-12-2014
6. Site Plan, received 3-12-2014
7. Drawing of proposed sign (elevation and details), received 3-12-2014
8. Photo of existing sign to be removed, received 3-12-2014
9. Notice of Complete Application, issued by City 3-27-2014
10. Notice of Application to surrounding property owners, mailed 3-28-14
11. Administrative Adjustment of Standards Criteria from Issaquah Municipal Code, IMC 18.11.540

AAS14-00002, Downtown Issaquah Plaza Sign, Notice of Decision 5-23-14